



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W.
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

Mary M. Cheh

Councilmember, Ward 3
Chair, Committee on Transportation and the Environment

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July 2, 2013

The Honorable Tommy Wells
Chairperson, Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 402
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairperson Wells,

Last week, the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety disapproved the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department's (FEMS) plan to redeploy ambulances. In your Committee Report on this resolution, you thoroughly highlighted the agency's many recent failures. In my opinion, the report was a devastating indictment of the current operations of FEMS. It is now very plain that the agency's ability to respond to emergencies has been significantly degraded, and I lay that fact at the doorstep of poor management. I believe that the current Chief no longer has the confidence of the people of the District and should resign.

Moreover, given the gross deficiencies revealed in your Committee Report, I believe that the District needs a comprehensive plan to bring FEMS back into a position of excellence, reliability, and prestige. Therefore, I ask that you request the Executive to submit such a plan with strict implementation dates to the Council within 90 days. The plan should identify the equipment, personnel, and deployment needs and the budget required to meet those needs. I am aware that there are various other "plans" floating around, but apparently there is no real plan with implementation dates and so on.

When formulating its plan, the Executive should be asked to think broadly about the future – not just about changing the deployment of its staff, as the agency had proposed. It should be creative and consider a wide array of options – from how much more funding the agency will need in the future, to whether we need more ambulances than fire engines, to whether the agency's chronic staffing shortages can be addressed by augmenting existing staff with a corps of volunteers.

The Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department provides essential services to residents and visitors. As I am sure you will agree, the District has an urgent obligation to fix this agency. Thank you again for your attentiveness and leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mary M. Cheh", written over a horizontal line.

Mary M. Cheh